

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
ON
ADMIRAL ROBERT LEE DENNISON, U. S. NAVY, RETIRED

FAMILY

Admiral Robert Lee Dennison was born in Warren, Pennsylvania, on 13 April 1901, son of Ludo W. and Florence (Lee) Dennison. In 1937 he married Mildred Fenton Mooney Neely of Washington, D.C. They have two children, a daughter, Lee, and a son, Robert Lee Dennison, Jr. His official address is Warren, Pennsylvania.

EDUCATION

He attended Kiskiminetas School, in Saltsburg, Pennsylvania, and was graduated from the U. S. Naval Academy with the Class of 1923. He completed the postgraduate course in diesel engineering at the Naval Postgraduate School, Annapolis, Maryland, in 1929 and in 1930 received the degree of Master of Science from Pennsylvania State College. The degree of Doctor of Engineering was awarded him by the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, in 1935.

NAVAL CAREER

His first duty after graduation was as a junior officer on the battleship ARKANSAS. In 1925 he qualified as a submarine following submarine training at New London, Connecticut, and then joined the submarine S-8. From 1930 to 1941 he had duty afloat on the cruiser CHESTER, commanded the rescue vessel ORTOLAN, was Commanding Officer of the submarine CUTTLEFISH, and also commanded the destroyer JOHN D. FORD. This extended sea-service was interrupted with two assignments ashore, one between 1933 and 1935 at the Engineering Experiment Station, Annapolis, Maryland, the second during 1938 and 1939, as Assistant Naval Inspector of Machinery at the Electric Boat Company, New London Ship and Engine Works, Groton, Connecticut.

Prior to and after the outbreak of World War II, he served on the staff of the Commander in Chief, Asiatic Fleet, and in this assignment took part in the early war against the Japanese during the campaigns in the Philippines and East Indies. In the winter of 1942 he became Chief of Staff to Commander Allied Naval Forces, East Australia, with similar duty on the staff of Commander Submarines, East Australia. Detached in August 1942, he became Chief of Staff to Commander Amphibious Force, Pacific Fleet (later NINTH Amphibious Force), participating in the seizure and occupation of Attu and Kiska in the Aleutians.

In these responsible duties he was in charge of the planning and execution of assigned missions, working tirelessly handling the various tactical problems with great skill. During the Attu assault, he supervised the successful execution of the plan which enabled our forces to carry out the attacks without loss of any navalships or personnel. For exceptional conduct while in Australia, and later at sea in the Aleutians Area, he was awarded the Legion of Merit.

Later in 1943 he returned to shore duty, and in the rank of Captain was assigned to the Joint War Plans Committee for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also serving with distinction as Special Advisor to the Under Secretary of the Navy. During 1946 and 1947 he had duty as Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Politico Military Affairs, where his services in connection with the coordination of foreign policy and naval policy prior to and subsequent to the end of hostilities were performed in such a manner as to reflect great credit upon himself and the Naval Service. He was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Legion of Merit for outstanding service in this field.

He had command of the USS MISSOURI during the period March 1947 until February 1948, when he reported in the highly responsible and distinguished assignment of Naval Aide to the President of the United States, and was so serving when promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral. In February 1953 he became Commander Cruiser Division FOUR, operating in the Atlantic, and in January 1954 he was detached for duty as Director of the Strategic Plans Division, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department. There he had additional duty from November 14, 1955 until June 1956 as Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Plans and Policy).

From June 18, 1956 to July 21, 1958, in the rank of Vice Admiral he was in command of the FIRST FLEET. Upon relinquishing that command, he returned to the Navy Department, where he served as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Plans and Policy). On March 31, 1959 he reported, in the rank of Admiral, as Commander in Chief Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean and in February 1960 became Commander in Chief, Atlantic and U.S. Atlantic Fleet and Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic. "For exceptionally meritorious conduct..." in that capacity, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. On May 1, 1963 he was transferred to the Retired List of the U. S. Navy.

DECORATIONS AND MEDALS

Distinguished Service Medal; Legion of Merit with Gold Star; Army Distinguished Unit Emblem (defense of Philippines in December 1941); Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon (USS PENNSYLVANIA, Aleutians Campaign); Order of Naval Merit (Commander) by Government of Brazil; Order of Crown (Cross of Commander) by Belgium; Honorary Officer in the Order of the British Empire, by Great Britain. He has also been recommended for the following decorations:

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Order of Naval Merit (Grand Officer) by Brazil; Legion of Honor (Commander) by the Republic of France; Order of Military Merit, First Class, by the Government of Cuba; and the Order of Orange-Nassau (Grand Officer) by the Government of the Netherlands.

American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, with two operation stars; World War II Victory Medal; National Defense Service Medal; and the Philippine Defense Ribbon with one bronze star.

CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

Admiral Dennison is a member of the Army-Navy Club of Washington, D.C.; New York Yacht Club; and the Society of Sigma Xi.

Interview No. 10 with Admiral Robert Lee Dennison, U. S. Navy
(Retired)

Place: His office in the Davis Building, Washington, D. C.

Date: Tuesday afternoon, 17 July 1973

Subject: Biography

By: John T. Mason, Jr.

Q: Admiral, we come today to one of the truly significant events in American history, almost a watershed, and you played such a major part in it - such a major role - that your story will be of immense value to future historians. I refer, of course, to the Cuban missile crisis.

I think you want to begin the account by talking about the background, the buildup, to this crisis which came to a head in October 1962.

Adm. D.: Well, Mr. Mason, I'd like to start with just a few items of introduction to look into the situation that led to the crisis in Cuba - or rather, the situation in Cuba that led into the crisis.

You will recall, of course, that on the evening of October 22nd 1962 President Kennedy spoke to the nation on radio and television and described the ominous buildup of Russian missiles

in Cuba, and announced the establishment of a naval quarantine to be effective at nine o'clock on the 24th of October. The purpose of this quarantine was to prevent the shipment of additional offensive armaments into Cuba. The President also made it clear that he intended to ensure the removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba and, if necessary, the United States was prepared to take additional action.

Q: And as you'll make clear that was no idle threat!

Adm. D.: No. Obviously it wasn't because we were prepared to take various courses of action. It came out later as we suspected it at the time the purpose of the deployment of these powerful weapons into Cuba was to change the strategic balance of atomic weapons. In other words, an MRBM or an IRBM in Cuba for the purpose of attacking North and South America was the equivalent of a very long-range missile based in Soviet Russia. So putting lesser-range into Cuba, nearer to us, presented a change in the whole strategic balance of atomic power. The ostensible purpose, according to Dobrynin, was to put atomic weapons in Cuba to defend Cuba against an invasion by the United States.

Before the crisis invasion was farthest from our minds. In other words, there were then no plans to invade Cuba. Everybody familiar with our own history would know that would be farthest from our intention.

Q: But it does imply, does it not, that they misread the Bay of Pigs episode and misunderstood it?

Adm. D.: It quite possibly does, but I think everybody would believe now that that was a complete phony, that the real reason was the one I first mentioned, and that is to change the balance of strategic atomic weapons. And that we couldn't take, and that's why we took drastic actions that I'm about to describe.

Q: There's one element about that position which intrigues me, however. The obvious speed-up that the Russians employed in installing these missile sites. It seemed to be a very hasty operation on their part.

Adm. D.: I think there's a perfectly natural explanation for that. They wanted to face us as rapidly as possible with a fait accompli. Had the buildup been gradual and easy, somewhere along the line we would have commenced to wonder what it was all about and probably would have done something about it. We undoubtedly would. But the chance for the Soviets having this a successful implant of weapons was enhanced by doing it rapidly, as rapidly as they could, so that all these things would be in place. They were quite brazen about it. Sure, there was a lot of subterfuge and trying to conceal things, but our intelligence was good enough so that we knew exactly what was going on and how fast, where, who. The Soviet forces, which I will talk about

NOTE

Page 397 has been removed for reasons of security.

As we go through this, it's well to bear in mind that the President and we in the military, certainly, and those in the State Department and of course, officials throughout the government didn't lose sight of that fact either. But this was the first warning that the public had had, or the first alarm that was sounded, that there was a serious threat against our own country.

To show you how fast things moved, at the beginning of that month the Atlantic Command was in normal peacetime status. There had been no alert, although we were keeping in very close touch through intelligence with what was going on in Cuba. I recall meeting with McCone in Panama, who was there together with some of his staff, to talk about the scarcity of intelligence on what was going on in Cuba. The C.I.A. was making U-2 flights I think only once every two weeks, which was bad enough, but if cloud cover prevented good pictures on one particular day, then they'd wait for another week or two - I forget whether it was a one-week interval or two weeks - before repeating the sortie. Well, this wasn't any good. We didn't know nearly enough about the details of what was going on.

We didn't have very much intelligence coming from on-the-ground or on-site sources. Sure, we had plenty of rumors, but to confirm these was something else again. McCone was very much impressed. He'd just taken over, as I remember, not long before from Allen Dulles. This was a very hush-hush meeting. That's why we met in Panama. So intelligence-gathering activity improved.

As time went on, however, the task of high-level aerial reconnaissance was turned over to the Strategic Air Command. They were the ones who did it.

Q: It had been in the hands of the CIA?

Adm. D.: Yes.

Q: And they gave it up reluctantly, I understand.

Adm. D.: I imagine they did. I don't know just exactly what happened when they were told to cease and desist, but I would certainly expect they would demur. We did have one U-2 plane shot down, as you remember.

In any event, about three weeks before the President's announcement we were just going along pretty much with business as usual, except for planning and taking certain precautionary measures. For example, the Atlantic Command was activated, but not the Army and Air Force components of it.

Perhaps I'd better just stop here and describe what this unified command structure is.

Q: Yes, I think it would be a good thing to put it in here.

Adm. D.: The unified command system was set up as a result of the National Security Act, as amended, and what it did in the way of setting up command was to establish what were called

"unified commands." For example, Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Commander-in Chief, Pacific, Commander-in-Chief, Europe, and each one of these commands comprised three components: Army, Navy, and Air Force. The commander of the unified command, a four-star officer, then had under him three elements, as I just mentioned. Each one of these elements was also commanded by a four-star officer. They could be employed separately, the Navy alone or the Army alone, or in any combination of the three. What happened in the Cuban missile crisis, as will come out later in our talk, was that the active element was naval, which meant it was under Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet. In this particular unified command, I was the unified commander. I was also commander of the naval component, the United States Atlantic Fleet.

The commander of the Army component was General Powell, who was Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Command. His headquarters were in Fort Monroe, which was not far from my own headquarters. The Commander-in-Chief of the air component was General Sweeney Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Tactical Air Command, who was at Langley Field, also nearby.

So that's essentially what the structure was. Now, there are a number of ways that an operation can be commanded up to the top. You can go through a joint task force or a subordinate unified commander, any number of ways. In this case, I decided that an operation of this magnitude we would discard our original concept, which was to set up a joint task force, and that I would command the operation through my component commanders,

including myself. Well, this was command at the top and the magnitude of the operation completely justified it, of course, because we had in this command almost 500,000 men. I'll get into more details later, but it was an operation of very, very large scope. But enough of that.

It might be interesting now to go back a little bit into what were the events that led up to this crisis. What was going on in Cuba. How did the soldiers get there.

Well, when Castro took over in 1959 he openly collaborated with the Communists and allowed them to operate politically. You may recall, too, that for some time he hadn't announced that he himself was a Communist, and many doubted in this country that he was, but that he was a benevolent person who had taken over from Batista. In any event, he was pretty harmless. But the relations of the 26th of July movement with the Communists were strained during the early period of his regime, especially in competition for control of the national labor organization.

Q: These were the regular Communists?

Adm.-D.: Yes. And the Soviets waited until February 1960 before responding to Castro's growing need for Soviet support. They were sort of watching and waiting to see what was going to happen. Then sugar-purchase agreements were made and followed by a considerable variety of trade and credit agreements. Then bloc technicians and arms began to flow into Cuba, and of course this was an indispensable element toward survival of Castro's regime,

and of course aligned Cuba with the bloc.

In early 1962 old-line Communists attempted to gain ascendancy over Castro. Now, whether the move was directed by Moscow or not is not known, but it's evident the Soviets felt uneasy dealing with Castro. In April 1962 Castro won out and the Soviets wound up behind him, endorsing the purge of several leading Communists including Castro's formation of the new Cuban Revolutionary Party, a good step toward a true Marxist-Leninist policy.

In May of 1962 there was a Cuban-Soviet supplementary trade protocol signed, which of course signified Moscow's acceptance of Castro and their belief that he could retain leadership in Cuba. This agreement called for \$750,000,000 in trade, an increase of over 40 percent over what had been effective in 1961. It became apparent of course that Castro intended to establish a Communist state in Cuba and was increasing his pro-Communist anti-U.S. actions, which, of course, explains our increased surveillance and intelligence efforts in the Cuban area.

Then Guantanamo came in the picture. Guantanamo is a U.S. naval base, leased from Cuba and as everyone knows, in southern Cuba, about six square miles along the coast, completely exposed. It would be indefensible against any sizeable attack, always in a position to be subjected to harassment. In June 1962 Castro declared a six-mile area around the base a militarized zone, and vacated farms and moved out people, put travel restrictions on the roads to and from the base. Then they commenced to blast us on the radio, claiming that our use of the base was for espionage.

They cited 180 or so aircraft violations of Cuban territorial limits, including our ships at sea as well.

Q: Did we read that as a sincere effort on his part to push us out?

Adm. D.: It certainly indicated the desire to get us out. Whether he was going to push us out is another matter. I mean that would be a pretty serious step. It would certainly have brought vigorous reaction from overpowering force which would have showed up as the Cuban missile crisis developed. There never was any attack on the base. I was down there many times in those days myself, and a curious thing went on. A great many Cuban people in the area worked on the base, and they'd go and come daily. All of them were known to us and we didn't make any great effort to search. On the other hand, when they left the base to go back into Cuba the Cubans themselves were the ones who really put them through a wringer, made men and women disrobe to examine their clothing and their persons, and made life miserable for them.

We were getting water from Cuba. The source of our water was outside the base. We were buying electric power from Cuba. All these things were not interrupted, except, as I just mentioned, the flow of people was somewhat impeded. It was just needling. There were very, very few incidents of real friction. For example, I remember on one visit down there during these tense

periods - during a tense period - my Marine aide, who was a major, with a couple of Marines went down to the gate that led into the Cuban area on the base - there's one gate. It was late in the evening and the Cuban guardhouse was just, oh, 100 feet beyond where ours was, so my aide and the one or two Marines who were with him walked out into this no man's land and started talking with the sentry, the Cuban sentry. The Cuban sentry provided the men there with coffee, and my Marine aide looked at one of the rifles that one of these sentries had and complimented him on the obvious care he'd given to his weapon. This flattered the sentry tremendously but he handed the gun to my Marine so he could take a good look at it, whereupon the other Cuban sentry became jealous and handed my Marine aide his gun. So here we'd captured -

Q: Disarmed him'

Adm. D.: There were incidents a little more serious than that, but there wasn't any real show of force on the part of the Cubans that presented a real military threat. But the potential was there.

They were trying to get us, of course, scared or unhappy or uneasy so that we would withdraw and wouldn't be able to use that base which was of tremendous value to us during this missile crisis, as it had been before during the Bay of Pigs operation.

Q: This is just a footnote, I suppose, but I noticed in the Abel

book that Adlai Stevenson, who was at the United Nations, during the conferences in the White House leading up to the President's public announcement urged that we evacuate and give away the Guantanamo base. He said it wasn't of any value to us.

Adm. D.: Well, of course, that's exactly what the Cubans were trying to get across, and with all due respect to Mr. Stevenson if he'd examined the history of our use of that base and its tremendously important strategic location, he couldn't possibly have come to such a conclusion.

But we didn't get out and, as I go along here, you'll learn of the steps we took to reenforce the base and to evacuate people and various other measures.

On 2 July 1962 Raul Castro arrived in Moscow for two weeks of talks with Khrushchev and other high-ranking Soviet officials. We deduced this, which turned out to be correct, as an attempt to secure additional military equipment, and the immediate result of this visit was a complex military buildup in Cuba that was not going to end until the sighting of offensive missiles in Cuba in October. So Raul Castro really sold the Soviets on moving fast and in strength to get in there.

Q: And it was more than just providing Cuba with arms. It was what you said earlier, changing the balance in strategic weapons.

Adm. D.: Yes, but Castro, I would assume, made the case that in

order to protect these weapons and to prevent us or scare us into doing anything about them he needed a considerable amount of military strength, which he got in the form of weapons, some of them sophisticated and some not. I'll get into that later and show just what kind of military opposition they were able to present to us.

Then, of course, beginning about that time there was a great increase of Soviet ship movements to Cuba. I mean, for example, in July 30 Soviet merchantmen arrived in Cuban ports, which was a 50 percent increase over a month before. And then in August 55 Soviet ships arrived in Cuba, four times more than had been there in August the year before. In September 66 ships arrived. That gave a total of about 150 or 151 ships in three months, which equaled the total of Soviet ship arrivals for the first six months of that year. Obviously there was a buildup going on.

Q: This alerted your command to something unusual, didn't it?

Adm. D.: It certainly did. Remember, as I mentioned earlier, that I'm talking now about the fall of 1962, before the President's proclamation and before they pulled the trigger on our plans.

In addition to the shipping increase, there were large numbers of Soviet-bloc military personnel prior to August and then there was a buildup during August and September when nine passenger ships arrived in Cuba with a total capacity of 20,000 passengers. But at that time we didn't have any way of really

confirming how many people were on board these ships because they would disembark at night. So our estimate was about a fourth of the total capacity. In other words, we figured it would be about 5,000 people.

Q: Was it the Navy that was charged with keeping count of the merchant ships and the passenger ships? Was it Navy Intelligence?

Adm. D.: Mainly. We were conducting surveillance as a normal course and we just kept it up. Of course, we had to keep track of all the shipping anywhere near the continental United States and in the Caribbean. Of course, it wasn't limited to just sightings at sea. We had intelligence sources in various parts of Europe and naval attaches all over the place, and the ships that were coming through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus and through Gibraltar or through the Channel, and those that came down past Iceland or off our own coast were sighted and reported and, in most cases, photographed.

We estimated finally that most of the people that the Soviets put in there were split up between the air force and the ground force about equally - the ground forces - and a smaller number for the Cuban Navy. Although we knew that these arms deliveries were beginning in 1960, then the buildup that I just mentioned, during New Year's Day parade in 1962 we got some idea of what Castro's newly acquired ground equipment really was. It turned out to be a sizeable number of medium tanks, a

somewhat smaller number of heavy tanks, an assault gun, a certain amount of rocket-launchers, artillery pieces, anti-aircraft weapons, mortars, rifles, carbines, submachine guns -

Q: These were all on display in Havana?

Adm. D.: Yes, a regular parade!

Q: Similar to what the Russians do on May Day!

Adm. D.: Yes. It was a great thing for us. Then, of course, we were able to step up our intelligence and get more and more knowledge of the make-up of the Cuban armed forces. The Cuban Navy, of course, was likewise getting a sizeable buildup in weapons. We'd given them a handful of very small boats - it was not really a navy, but after the beginning of 1962 the Cuban naval forces started to build up. For example, in the first quarter they got a number of PT boats and a patrol boat. Now, these are modern types -

Q: Was that the Kronstadt?

Adm. D.: Yes, the Kronstadt was the patrol boat. These were towed over. The PTs were carried on the decks of ships. So obviously we knew how many they had and what types. We also found out through our sources that a number of Cuban personnel had undergone training in the use of these types.

Q: Training in Russia?

Adm. D.: Yes. Oh yes, in the Soviet Union, of course.

Then we were able through our reconnaissance to detect Soviet merchant ships with crates on deck, which indicated that they were shipping Komar missile-launching boats. These, of course, were equipped with missiles, surface-to-surface missiles, homing types, with considerable range and were really quite a powerful weapon against ships, also against shore installations along our coasts.

Q: Coastal type boats, they were?

Adm. D.: Yes. These missiles carried a warhead with about 2,000 pounds of high explosive. They couldn't reload at sea, they had to go back into port in case they fired some of these.

Q: They were among the very newest of the Soviet types, weren't they?

Adm. D.: Yes, they were.

Then in mid-1961, Soviet aircraft commenced to come in, and by January of 1962 the Cuban Air Force had about 60 MIG fighters, jet fighters, of several different classes, and again the Soviets had trained about 75 Cuban pilots who were sent back. They had been trained in Czechoslovakia, and that was supposed to be under Soviet supervision. There was another pilot training school near

Havana. And, of course, the airfields had to be improved, longer runways, new airfield construction, revetments built.

In October when the missile crisis was about to break, Castro had 20 airfields going to support these MIG planes. Then in September 1962 we found they had MIG-21s, jet fighters. That was a sophisticated airplane. It's a Mach-2 type, and it was one of the Soviet Union's most modern fighters. It ended up that they had about 42 of these new fighter-interceptors.

Then we found out that these sophisticated planes were being flown by experienced Soviet pilots, not Cubans. The Cubans had been trained in these older fighter-interceptors, subsonic mostly.

In early September we found surface-to-air missiles in Cuba. These were SA-2 which had an altitude capability of about 60,000 feet and some capability up to about 80,000, and a slant range of about 25 miles.

Q: These are familiarly known as the SAMs, aren't they?

Adm. D.: Yes. At that time they hadn't given them highly sophisticated SAMs, so that these had a minimum altitude limitation which worked greatly to our advantage as time went on because we could have planes take off and go down on the deck outside of their range and come in under the minimum altitude, right on the deck. I have many photographs of our fighters going in on a photographing mission at 50 or 100 feet.

Q: Low-level photographing?

Adm. D.: Low-level, yes, and many photographs show the gun crews at these sites running to man their stations, but they couldn't make it because we just appeared out of nowhere at a hell of a speed and were flying at such a low altitude that we were an almost impossible target. As I recall, out of the many, many flights we made over Cuba, I think only once or twice did any plane come back with any bullet holes in it. None of our pilots were hurt nor were our planes seriously damaged. So, fortunately they didn't have SAMs with their radars that could hit anything at real low altitudes.

They had about seven SAM sites. By early September they had about ten of these SAM sites, then in October they had twenty-four. So there was a dramatic buildup, as I've just indicated, of their military power.

Q: Stemming from the decisions that were made in Moscow in July?

Adm. D.: - Yes, it was probably Raul's visit that brought most of this on, and it was very rapid. Then, of course, they commenced to get a lot of electronics in there, a number of new radar sites, and they had early-warning systems, target-acquisition radars, ground-control intercept radars, fire control, missile control, and all the things that go along with sophisticated aerial warfare.

Q: I think you at one time lumped together all these electronic devices and said such an incredible collection for such a small island -

Adm. D.: Yes, indeed, it was. Then, of course, it was perfectly obvious that these defenses were under the supervision and control of Soviet technicians, because it was beyond the Cubans to handle things like that.

Then we commenced to get into Cuba these Il-28s, bombers. These were shipped in pieces and assembled on the Cuban airfields.

Q: They're light bombers, are they not, missile-carrying bombers?

Adm. D.: Yes, they're light bombers. It's a light jet bomber with the usual weapons.

Q: And they became one of the bones of contention, the Il-28s?

Adm. D.: Yes. As time went on and they were assembling them we could follow the assembling of these bombers and predict when they'd be ready to fly. Then, of course, knowing where they were we could have wiped them out without too much trouble, if we decided to do that.

There were 42 bombers that were credited and they never got more than 20 of them in various stages of assembly before they took the whole pack of them out when it came to a showdown.

The interesting thing is that the MRBM missiles came into the picture. In early September they started construction of these sites for these MRBMs. We confirmed this on the 14th of October with intelligence that showed that at San Cristobal there was a complex of four sites, each with four launch positions, and two additional sites at Sagua la Grande were confirmed on the

17th, bringing the total to six sites and a total of twenty-four launch positions. The missile was what was known as the SS-4 with a range capability of about 1,100 nautical miles.

Then on 15 to 17 October we confirmed the construction of the intermediate-range missile sites. Each site contained four launch positions, for a total of three or four sites. These missiles had a range of 2,200 nautical miles, considerably greater than the MRBMs, and this meant that they could cover practically all of the United States and, of course, a large part of Central and South America as well.

Q: Admiral, when you had your conference with John A. McCone down in Panama, did he indicate his concern over the possibility of missile installations in Cuba? Because he apparently later on in September kept on talking about this.

Adm. D.: Well, unfortunately I don't have a record of the date. I consulted with people in CIA, one of whom was there. But it wasn't long after he'd taken over and it was quite a while before we had any idea of missiles being put in. It was just that we wanted to know what the hell all this buildup of Cuba was, what was going on. We were then just operating in a dense fog.

No, I don't recall he had anything to say about missiles and I don't think I did either at that time.

Q: You mentioned the overfly of the U-2 on the 14th of October,

when we did see missile sites at San Cristobal. The point is made that up until that time the Kennedy administration had been very reluctant to accept the idea that Khrushchev would ever think of putting missiles into Cuba, and after that tangible evidence they changed their minds.

Adm. D.: There was a little more to it than that. All we were doing in the first part of October was flying peripheral missions around Cuba. I forget how far offshore this was, but quite a way. We weren't permitted to go in over Cuba, except with the U-2. But the high-altitude U-2 mission discovered these missile installations, and on the 14th the flight confirmed that offensive missile bases were completed and others were under construction. We were making flights over our own base at Guantanamo, but we were supposed to fly inside the fence line, which was like flying a high-speed airplane round your back yard! I don't know why this extreme caution. It was just the way we were ordered to operate.

Well, we're up now to the quarantine itself or the planning or just whatever it is you want to talk about.

Q: Admiral, I know that the Navy and the other military forces are constantly making plans for all sorts of situations and obviously in the case of the Cuban crisis you had plenty of plans, and you were developing plans as the crisis developed, were you not? Will you talk about that?

Adm. D.: Yes, you're quite right, but remember that as CinC^Lant

my area of responsibility was well defined and well understood. What I didn't have was a fully activated command. In other words, the commander, myself, was, of course, activated and the naval component, and the other two components, the Army and Air Force, were designated. But I was able to perform my responsibilities by developing a family of plans for various contingencies. I received a great deal of help from General Sweeney of the Air Force, whom I designated Air Force component commander, and General Powell, of the Army, whom I designated Army forces commander. And our staffs worked together. We were all in the same general area, and this was just great. We were on a very friendly basis, we understood each other and respected each other. So we weren't operating in a vacuum at all, but as the situation developed and the enemy strength became more and more apparent, and the nature of the strength, we finally came to a point where I decided to change the command structure for the Cuban operation from operating under the command of a joint task force, which would be responsible to me, to taking over the command myself, through my component commanders. Then, of course, the Joint Chiefs of Staff finally did activate the command, which resulted in practically no changes in plans, except refinement as time went on.

Just to give you an idea of what I'm talking about in the way of contingency, we had plans, for example, for air strikes in various categories and varying strength. One might be a plan to strike only missile installations, including the control, radar, or it might be a strike to take out Cuban airfields, of

which, as I said previously, there was a large number. Or Cuban military installations. And the same thing would apply for the use of Army and Marine Corps forces.

Remember, I had five Army divisions and the 2nd Marine Division, reinforced by elements of the 1st Marine Division. And there were operations planned for the use of these forces against various landing areas in Cuba. All these would require naval and Air Force support. Then, finally, naval plans which would go anywhere from simple surveillance to gunfire support or taking out coastal targets or destroying Cuban shipping or Soviet shipping or any shipping that interfered with us. Or the application of these various components alone or in combination.

So our plans had to be extremely flexible. My plans were approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and, of course, were known to the President. The application was of tremendous interest. He had to know what we could do, how we were going to do it. Just consider the seriousness of deciding to invade Cuba, a densely packed area. We were up against some pretty strong ground forces, so some very drastic preparation would have to be made in the way of our bombing, gunfire, a great many people would have been killed. The Cuban beaches are really, by and large, not worth a damn, narrow entry areas, and so on. So it would have been quite a bloody affair.

And then, once having captured Cuba and occupied it, the United States would have had a terrible problem in rehabilitation, establishing a government. We would have been in there for years. All I'm pointing out is that it was a very, very serious

decision. Also, the nature and degree of air strikes. You just don't go flying around indiscriminately dropping bombs on Havana, for example. The targets had to be carefully selected. We had to know a great deal about them. The same way with naval operations. What kind of naval operations? Antisubmarine warfare?

But we did have our plans, they were approved, and this put into motion the creation of a large network of communications and a large number of supporting plans from the Strategic Air Command and CinCStrike, and from all commanders who had any conceivable contact with the operations. So the monumental effort of planning had to be very thorough, and there were so many supporting plans.

Every one of these master plans - I'm talking about CinC^Lant's plans - go to these various subordinate commanders, and they have to create their own supporting plans based on the tasks or missions assigned to them in the master plan. And all the service commands, for example, who are going to supply the food and the gasoline and all the material things, ammunition - they all have to make plans. Just consider what's involved, for example, in the lift of two airborne divisions.

Now, the entire U.S. tactical air force was assigned to me, through General Sweeney, to give you some idea of the magnitude of the air effort. Now this included not only combat aircraft but large numbers of troop transport aircraft. The fleet plans for ships' overhauls had to be altered. There were a multitude of things that had to be planned for and done.

But these were all done because we had the blueprints.

In this case, we have an example of how a military operation ought to be conducted. I mentioned the various things that we could have done and instead of pulling the trigger and doing everything all at once, that is, invading and conducting air strikes, blockade, and so on, the President made a very wise decision in using naval power, and this fortunately taught Khrushchev a great lesson about what naval power can do, or sea power can do.

The blockade, euphemistically called the quarantine, was directed toward interception of the flow of weapons into Cuba.

Q: Specific weapons?

Adm. D.: Yes, missiles. And of course we also wanted them to get the missiles out that were already in there but not in operating condition yet, at the time I'm talking about.

By using this quarantine system we were able to show the Soviets several things. One was that we weren't going to permit anything more to get in there, we were determined, as the President pointed out, to take whatever steps we needed to protect our own security. And if Castro was going to stand in the way, that was just too bad for Castro.

So, of the various options we had we used the first option, the use of naval forces alone. When I say "alone" I don't mean that nobody else was doing anything because the Air Force was doing plenty of reconnaissance work and training and over-

hauling their own supporting plans and what not. And, of course, the Army. We deployed Army forces forward. For example, we took the 1st Armored Division out of Fort Hood in Texas into Fort Stewart in Georgia.

All this had to be known by Khrushchev.

We combat loaded all the Marines we could lift. They were already to go. So it was perfectly evident. I mean the newspapers had most of it, that we were undertaking a massive preparation for anything that we wanted to do in the way of fighting.

Q: And quarantine was actually the initial step? We could proceed from that point if necessary?

Adm. D.: We certainly could and would. It was perfectly obvious to Khrushchev that we were ready to do it and the will to do it was conveyed to him by the President himself. And he believed the President. He had misread the President some months before this, in that unfortunate meeting in Europe, and I'm sure that he thought we would dilly-dally and write notes and protest and go to the United Nations, but we didn't.

Anyway, to get back to these plans. The plans were under constant revision as the situation developed, but the basic plans were there. I don't think it would be of value to go into the details of the plans. That's much too complicated a matter.

Q: No, Admiral, I would think that it was a considerable relief

to you when the decision was made on the 20th to go for the quarantine, or the blockade, rather than one of the other alternatives? I mean something definite was decided.

Adm. D.: Well, it was a relief. In that sense, it was a relief and I certainly believed that this was by far the wisest course of action. But it seemed to me to be perfectly evident that the next priority was air strikes, and that was what we were completely prepared to do, had we had to do it. In other words, if these missiles got operational then we were indeed immediately threatened and we couldn't play around much longer. In the end it came down to a matter of almost hours from the time that we decided that these sites were operational, or would be operational, before Khrushchev threw in the sponge.

Now, in those few hours, had the decision not been made by Khrushchev, then we would have had to undertake other provisions in my plans to at least take out those missile sites with air strikes. Don't forget we had tremendous tactical air power there. Not only Air Force forces but the Navy carrier forces. Tremendous power, and Khrushchev and Castro damn well knew it. We were looking right down their throats.

We also had to be ready to undertake amphibious attacks which of course would have required application of Air Force forces and Navy carrier forces in support. I have already discussed some factors concerning this type of operation. I will simply mention here that the landing of assault forces followed

by support forces would be an operation of considerable magnitude

But, yes, I think the decision was wise and I was relieved to get going. The President had given plenty of warning as to when he was going to make this declaration. I had over two days to get my ships in position. When the declaration was made my ships were in position. They were there and ready for business.

Q: Did you, when you went up to Washington on the 21st, see the President?

Adm. D.: Yes.

Q: What kind of a conference did you have with him?

Adm. D.: Oh, it wasn't exactly perfunctory. We both knew what the job was and how we were going to go about it. There wasn't really very much to talk about, except get in there and pitch! But I must say he was perfectly marvelous and I never got a call from the White House during the entire operation. He let me alone. He interfered with my communications sometimes. I don't mean that they changed my messages, but by trying to get through to the commanders who were actually on the line they'd sometimes gum up my command circuits. It happens all the time, I guess. But I had to tell all these Washington stations to get off my circuits and stay off because they were interfering with operations.

Q: Would you tell me at this point the story of the appointment of Admiral Ward to be commander of the Second Fleet?

Adm. D.: Yes. This was an important command, of course, and Ward was the man for it. He was perfectly marvelous.

Q: He'd been in command of the Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet.

Adm. D.: Yes. Ordinarily I would have gone to the change-of-command ceremony when he took over the SEcond Fleet, and I wasn't there, because I knew what was coming in the next couple of days. This attracted some attention and speculation in the press because everybody knew that ordinarily I would have been there and, so far as anybody knew, I wasn't in the hospital! Or showing that I didn't like Admiral Ward. He was told by my chief of staff, probably, Admiral Beakley, to make the ceremony short and to report to me in my headquarters after the ceremony's completion, which Ward did. I filled him in completely on what the situation at the moment was. He, of course, was familiar with my war plans... Having been commander of the Amphibious Force he knew that part of it anyhow, but he needed a complete briefing and that's what he got.

And I believe it was the next day when he and I went up to Washington together -

Q: It was on the 21st, on Sunday, and this was to meet with the Joint Chiefs.

Adm. D.: Yes, and of course that wasn't anything dramatic either. Everybody knew what the job was, and the Joint Chiefs were completely behind me. They had every confidence that things were

going to go all right. They approved the war plans, and we were ready to go, and we did.

Q: Where did Admiral Anderson come in the picture? I mean, with you and your command, or didn't he?

Adm. D.: He was, of course, a member of the Joint Chiefs and, since this was a naval operation, his war room was probably the best informed of any. But he didn't interfere with my operations at all. I ran them through my own staff set-up. Through Admiral Hogle whom I put in charge of my quarantine plot center, and quite an elaborate set-up we had. George was very helpful and I think he was responsible for keeping a lot of people and things off my back, because I had plenty to do without spending time that I could otherwise devote to something more important than talking to people. I didn't see any press during the operation. I moved around quite a bit. We had advance headquarters set up in Florida, Sweeney and Powell and myself.

But everything went smoothly and I think I may have mentioned before that one significant thing about the composition of forces was that they were all seasoned professionals. We had no Reserves called up, except some pilots for the Air Force Air Transport Command. So it was really a joy.

This decision of Khrushchev's, and again had that been delayed more than a few hours after the time he made it, it might have been too late. Not that we were going to resort to atomic weapons, but we would have certainly had to strike Cuba, at least the missile sites and airfields.

Q: Admiral, at one point I believe you said that there were three phases - three actual phases - to the quarantine operation. The first of them, with the inception of the quarantine on 24 October - and this period extended through 4 November and it had to do with the ships that were bound to Cuba - do you want to talk about that?

Adm. D.: Yes, certainly. Let's put this in a little bit of focus.

The quarantine line, so called, could have been established in a number of places. It could be established fairly close inshore, for example, which would have meant economy of forces, or it could have been set up outside of the reasonable range of any land-based aircraft from Cuba. The latter was what was done.

Q: That was the determining factor, was it, that you were out of the range of land-based aircraft?

Adm. D.: Yes. Then, of course, we didn't know at that time exactly how badly off they were for readiness to use these air-fields or to use their airplanes, but at any rate the quarantine was set up initially fairly far out, and then the quarantine arc was finally readjusted closer to Cuba, seaward of the Bahamas chain. That was done between 30 and 31 October.

Q: What caused that change?

Adm. D.: Realization that the Cuban ability to do anything about air was so limited, and it meant fewer ships, and a tighter operation. It really didn't have any great significance.

Q: How far out did the line extend?

Adm. D.: Well, I don't have a chart handy, but it wasn't just off the coast of Cuba, it was seaward of the Bahamas. I'll get into it a little later, but of course we did have a quarantine line set up south of Cuba, too. But to get back to these three phases.

We set up a quarantine plot in my OpCon center on the 29th of October, headed again by Rear Admiral R. D. Hogle, who was assigned about 30 officers and men to be on his staff. I'd like to mention the magnitude of this search effort.

About 46 ships, 240 aircraft, and some 30,000 personnel were directly involved in the effort to locate ships inbound for or outbound from Cuba. That's quite a sizeable group of people and ships and aircraft. We used naval air patrol squadrons who were flying out of Puerto Rico and Florida and the Azores, principally. We had a very, very complete coverage, visual and also radar. We had reconnaissance planes from the Air Force to help us. They were the ones that operated out of the Azores principally. We were covering something like 4,500,000 square miles of ocean, if you can imagine that.

Q: They operated from their base in Terceira?

Adm. D.: Yes, and the Navy was also flying from Roosevelt Roads, Guantanamo Bay, Bermuda, and the Azores, Argentia, Jacksonville, Key West, Norfolk, Patuxent. Altogether there were about 200 sightings of ships that were of immediate interest, and of course the other ships were by no means of no interest. We just knew where they were headed and what their names were, and had a pretty good idea what their cargo was. Most of the ships were first sighted by aircraft and then were vectored in by my headquarters to ships in the quarantine line. In other words, the line wasn't necessarily static. We just didn't sit there. We knew where these ships were and went out to intercept them.

Q: When the quarantine was first established, what were the orders? To really board the ships?

Adm. D.: No, this was to be done only by direction. Remember this was a selective operation and, again, we weren't looking for POL or for food or for people or anything of that sort. We were looking specifically for warheads and missiles. And the first result of - this operation was a number - I think it was 12 - of Soviet ships sighted in the vicinity of the Azores, or that general part of the Atlantic, in any event, and these ships had sailed from Murmansk mostly. At any rate they hadn't gone through the North Sea or the Channel or the Strait of Gibraltar, unlike most of the other ships which had made ports of call on the way over. Our sightings confirmed the fact that they were configured to handle the IRBM and doubtless that's exactly where the IRBMs were.

And when the President made his announcement within hours these ships had gotten the word because they all hove to and after a few more hours reversed course and went back to wherever they came from. So they never got anywhere near the quarantine line.

Well, we knew this but we didn't just want to assume that all was going to be well and just abandon the quarantine line. We wanted to keep that going, which we did. There could have been warheads or other things that would have been of interest to us.

To get back to these three phases. You might describe them this way: from the 24th of October until the 4th of November, you might call the first one, and many Soviet ships, including the ones that I've mentioned, turned back and never came anywhere near Cuba. Others even with nonsuspicious cargo slowed or stopped, apparently awaiting guidance. Now this demonstrates pretty good control by the Soviets, that they could get through to these merchant ships and with not very much elapsed time either. Most of these ships, the last ones I mentioned were not suspicious cargoes, did resume their course and go in to Cuba. They weren't carrying the kind of cargoes that we were looking for and said we were going to stop.

So, you see, you could say that quarantine was successful without ever having been really tested by facing us with these ships that we damned well knew were going to stop, no matter whether we had to sink them or what.

The second phase you might describe as being from the 5th to the 11th of November, and we established a rapid code to designate suspect ships that we might want to give special attention to.

Eleven such ships that we wanted to pay particular attention to were observed outbound from Cuba. These ships were intercepted, inspected for missiles, without actually being stopped or boarded. It was pretty hard to hide these missiles.

Q: And they were actually carrying missiles out from Cuba?

Adm. D.: Well - yes, that was the case, but the masters of these Soviet ships had been pretty well read into the act too, because even though they were reluctant sometimes to cooperate they all did, we could get an actual count. We knew the number of missiles that were in Cuba. We had an actual head count. We saw them being loaded into ships and we knew what ships. Then we had close aerial reconnaissance ship to ship. We had one amusing experience - I think it was during this stage of the proceedings - where a destroyer closed to speak to this Soviet ship and we had put Russian-speaking officers in each one of these quarantine ships. We did that at the very first. So this Russian-speaking officer in the destroyer hailed this ship in Russian - "Where are you from? Where are you bound?" and all that kind of stuff. And the answer came back from the Soviet ship's bridge in perfect English!

Q: This decision to put Russian-speaking officers on board all of our quarantine ships was your decision, was it not?

Adm. D.: Yes. It was in my plans.

Q: Well, it was known to Admiral Anderson, wasn't it?

Adm. D.: I don't know. I understand later somebody asked him about it and he didn't know.

Q: That's what Abel says in his book.

Adm. D.: I never talked to George, but it's conceivable he didn't. It seemed to me it was a simple routine matter. For God's sake, if you're going to stop Russian ships it would be a good idea to have somebody on board who could speak Russian, one would think.

Q: It was in the second phase that you actually boarded one of the ships, was it?

Adm. D.: I don't think we did. I think the only ship we ever boarded was the Marucla, which was inbound.

Q: Oh, that was in the first phase then?

Adm. D.: Yes, and it carried a nonsuspicious cargo, and really I did it to show that we could and would do it. Of course, they didn't know that we already knew what was in that ship. It was little more than a stunt, a demonstration that we were effective.

Q: Was this called for by Washington, or did you do this on your own?

Adm. D.: I don't remember. I think I did it on my own, but I probably got permission because this was pretty sensitive. I just don't recall. But if I hadn't got an order to do it I would have asked for it because it seemed like a pretty good idea for my own people, as well as the world, because to sit out on a quarantine station and not do a damned thing for a few days gets kind of boring. So I tried out our system.

Well, then from the 11th to the 21st of November you might call the third phase. During this period we trailed some ships and designated six ships that were of special interest.

Q: They were all going out from Cuba?

Adm. D.: No, the ones that I'm now talking about were incoming - some of them were out and some were in. We found no offensive weapons on any of the ships that we intercepted. There were photographs of them, so they obviously had to be the inboard ones.

I remember one interesting point is that during the so-called first phase we held up our operations while U Thant went from the UN down to Cuba. He worked directly with Castro, trying to find some way out of this Cuban crisis. I think that turned out to be a fairly fruitless endeavor because it wasn't Castro we were dealing with, it was Khrushchev.

Q: Admiral, the Latin American nations as a group voted backing of the United States actions. On the 19th, I believe it was, of November the Organization of American States voted 19 to nothing

to support us. Would you talk about their support, as it was apparent to your command?

Adm. D.: Yes. You just mentioned that the Organization of American States approved the course of action our President had decided on, but then it turned out that many of them made concrete offers of assistance and we did form a task force under Commander, South Atlantic, one of my subordinate commanders, for the conduct of quarantine surveillance over the southern approaches to Cuba. Actually, we knew that there wasn't any significant block shipping coming from south of Cuba because of the tremendous surveillance effort we had which I've already mentioned. At the beginning we had a U. S. destroyer, and two Dominican Republic destroyers, and while they weren't active for very long they did make a lot of sightings. They were just having the time of their life! They did make some sightings and intercepts, but the major advantage of it, of course, was the valuable demonstration that the United States and South American countries were joined in combating the Communist threat.

Q: It was one of the political aspects.

Adm. D.: Yes. Militarily it didn't mean a damned thing. As a matter of fact, it was more of a headache than it was a help, and they came out of it pretty well because we fueled them and gave them a good repair job. But they were gung-ho, I'll say that, almost embarrassingly so.

An interesting point about command here is that the Latins are very sensitive about having another nation in Latin America command their forces. That's why we setup the Commander, South Atlantic. Not just for this purpose, he'd been in existence for a long time, but to conduct combined operations with these various Latin American navies. They would work together with us under our command and did beautifully, but an Argentinian wouldn't accept a Brazilian task force commander, or vice versa, or any other Latin American wouldn't accept any other. But with us it was different. So we were sort of a catalyst for bringing these people together. I had meetings with the top naval people in these nations from time to time and the CNO used to hold gatherings of Latin American CNOs. They were a wonderful social group. They knew each other, they spoke the same sea language, but when it came to submitting forces to the command of some other national, no. So here we had - that accounts for the presence of an American DD in this task group. As I recall, I didn't have them report to Admiral Ward. I had this command report to me - so that they had, you know, a little more stature and they were operating an important unit in this over-all effort, and they weren't unimportant. Their importance, as we discussed, was more political than military.

Q: I saw a note, Admiral, to the effect that you recommended to the Joint Chiefs at one point that CinCCarib be given the task of preventing the passage through the Panama Canal of ships carrying prohibited materials destined for Cuba. Was there any

action taken on that, or were there any such ships going through?

Adm. D.: I don't remember the circumstances of that at all, but it would seem to be a purely precautionary measure because by the time any bloc ship got anywhere near the Panama Canal we would have known all about it long before, with this gigantic surveillance we had on.

Q: Then there was another minor item. The Turkish government raised the question of the status of three Turkish ships that were in the Cuban trade, and asked that they be exempted from the quarantine. Was this request honored?

Adm. D.: Oh, I'm sure it was because, again, we would have known what was in those ships, and they surely weren't carrying Soviet missiles. It was almost a sure bet that any commercial ship, even though it might be manned by navy people, would be Soviet government. I mean they're not going to put an IRBM in a Polish bottom. It takes a special ship to do it anyhow. And they're certainly not going to put atomic warheads in a Turkish ship.

So if we ever got such a request, which I assume we did, obviously we would never have stopped a Turkish ship unless we knew damned well that that they had something on board, which is almost inconceivable. So I assumed and then we made a little hay out of it and said, "Yes, our dear friends, we of course won't include any of your ships."

Q: There's one other large aspect of this whole operation, and that pertains to submarines. Do you want to talk about that phase of it?

Adm. D.: Yes.

Q: Perhaps beginning with the 17th of October when we sighted a submarine replenishment ship off of the Azores, the Terek?

Adm. D.: I might mention briefly that Soviet submarine activity in connection with this Cuban missile crisis began with a sighting of a Soviet submarine replenishment ship, the Terek, in the North Atlantic, in the vicinity of the Azores.

Q: Is that a kind of a submarine mother ship?

Adm. D.: Yes, a Navy replenishment ship for fuel and supplies and so on for submarines. We kept this ship under surveillance, and on the 22nd of October the Terek was sighted not far from the Azores refueling a Zulu-type submarine, and the topside condition, and the submarine's requirement for fuel, of course, indicated that she'd been at sea for quite a long period. Considering this together with two possibly valid contact reports, she'd been on a covert patrol in the Western Atlantic, near the East Coast of the United States.

Now, we'd had low-level reports for some time that Soviet submarines would be based in Cuba, and the buildup of weapons in Cuba made these reports somewhat significant.

Q: Were they reports from refugees and that sort of thing?

Adm. D.: Some of them, yes. We had nothing really substantial to go on, but it didn't seem beyond the realm of possibility that the Soviets were establishing a submarine base in southern Cuba. A considerable time later we did have hard evidence that they did have tenders and things in Cuban ports that were equipped to handle submarines.

But in any event we did know for a fact that Soviet submarines were in the Western Atlantic, and the first one we brought up was the conventional Foxtrot type, which was picked up on the surface, 300 miles south of Bermuda. After that we picked up more sightings. Altogether there were six sightings of Soviet conventionally-powered submarines in the approaches to the Caribbean, and five of these were photographed. Shortly after we brought them up and put them on their way, our practice was to close these ships that were brought up if they were held down -

Q: Just stood over them till they finally came up?

Adm. D.: Yes, and hail them and ask if we could be of any assistance, then politely tell them to get out of the area and head for home, which they did. One of the submarines that we brought up had a casualty which required it to go back home on the surface. It could have been a casualty to her motors, for example, or it could have been some fault in their tank venting or blowing system. In any event, she couldn't submerge, and

had to go back on the surface. Of course, they went back to the Northern Fleet bases in Russia.

There's one interesting point about this submarine deployment of theirs, and that is the fact that we got these submarines so soon after the quarantine was established indicates that they had to leave their Northern Fleet bases in early October. In other words, they probably had to proceed in most daylight hours submerged and then come up at night on the surface, but their speed was so slow that they couldn't possibly have been in the area where we found them without leaving long before we'd established the quarantine line. Nobody knew in early October that we were going to do it or where we would do it, so it's always been a mystery to me as to why these submarines were where they were at the time they were and in that particular area. Now, the only explanation, aside from sheer coincidence, is that they were en route to ports in Cuba, the base there. That, as far as I know, has never been confirmed. They were evasive in various ways and wanted to submerge, but I remember one case we brought up one of them with one number painted on the starboard side of her periscope sheers and another number on the opposite side. I suppose the idea was that if she were sighted more than once we might think there were two submarines there when there actually was one. Seems a little far-fetched, but I don't know why you'd paint one identifying number on one side of the ship and a different one on the other.

I hope, one day, to find out why it was that they were in that area at the time they were. Right now I don't know.

Q: Well, Sir, you have some personal observations to make on this whole operation, and on the presence of the submarines in the Western Atlantic?

Adm. D.: Well, I think just the fact that they would deploy submarines so far away from home and so close to our coast was an indication of the seriousness of the Soviet effort in the Western Atlantic. It's quite an important matter when they start deploying that kind of a weapon so close to our shores. They must know that the reaction would have been violent. So it isn't just a minor matter. I think it's a matter of major significance in this whole picture.

Q: And it gives another dimension to the nature of Cuba as a Soviet base.

Adm. D.: Indeed it does.

Q: You certainly have some general observations on this operation because you have expressed them to me from time to time. Would you repeat them now?

Adm. D.: I think I certainly made the point about the magnitude of our effort. It turned out that this incident, if you want to describe it as an incident, was the largest, most complicated joint operation since Korea. I told you we had almost 500,000 people involved in it and tremendous power assembled. It proved,

I think, the value of the unified command structure and the workability of it. We have really here in the account of this crisis a blueprint for the application of force.

I think that all of us who were a part of this were greatly educated. We found out a number of things. For example, the ability of our armed forces to react quickly and expertly. But above and beyond all that, it seems to me that in those days, and even more so in these days, when both sides - and I'm talking now about the Soviet Union and the United States, of course - hold weapons capable of accomplishing unimaginable devastation, that we're in a period of nuclear stalemate, and in a condition where each side has an overkill capability.

I further believe that there can't be any acceptable solution to many international problems through the use of these weapons. It just isn't the answer to any situation that can be conceived. There's no such thing as a local application of an atomic weapon. They aren't that kind of a weapon. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't maintain a really effective nuclear force, and I think everybody realizes that, because only by maintaining such a force, or such forces, can we best assure that the enemy will not initiate an atomic exchange. He could wipe us out before we could get up off the deck.

Q: Only is the opposite true, if you do maintain a balance.

Adm. D.: Under these conditions and in this environment the catastrophic results of a missile exchange were fully recognized and I think ^{if} that's the case, there's an increasing likelihood

of limited probes, incursions, and even extensive hostile action. Just think what has gone on through our recent history. We've had Korea, we've had Vietnam. We're faced with incidents, some small and some large, all over the world. The Middle East is a critical situation now. But none of the situations I mentioned, and others that I haven't, can find a solution by the use of atomic weapons on somebody's part. It just isn't in the cards. What would we do with an atomic weapon in the Middle East situation in case we become involved, or the Soviets?

So, in this kind of a situation, we're going to have more of these sometimes very serious situations where the only solution is the use of force short of atomic exchange. And Cuba is an outstanding example of just what I've said.

In this case, with our background of atomic power and expressed determination to use this power if we had to, we turned back the Soviet adventure into Cuba. It's obvious I think by now how we did it. It was done because we had the power of our military forces, in this case so-called conventional power. That's what did it. It was done by the judicious employment of some of these forces in quarantine, antisubmarine warfare reconnaissance, and the staging of very, very powerful airborne and armored Army forces. I had the whole tactical Air Force under my command. We deployed strong amphibious forces, strong antisubmarine warfare forces, carrier striking forces, and all of this provided tangible evidence of our strength, determination, and ability to apply U. S. power when, where, and if required.

Q: None of which can ever be concealed from the enemy, can it?

Adm. D.: No, and it is something which really you don't want to conceal. Obviously, you can't conceal a buildup such as we accomplished, deploy a division like the 1st Armored Division from Texas to Georgia without everybody knowing about it. It was probably a good thing that Khrushchev did know about it. I think we probably should have published it in all the papers so he would know, let him realize that we were determined to do something and we had the force to do it with, backed up by our atomic weapons.

In any event, we established a necessary atmosphere which gave time for our opponent to consider seriously before resorting to all-out war. And, at the same time, it gave him a way out, an avenue of escape. I concluded, after considerable thought, that this is absolutely the most important lesson to be drawn from the Cuban crisis.

I'm reminded of what President Kennedy had to say as he reviewed part of the Atlantic Command, in this case the 1st Armored Division at Fort Stewart. He inspected the entire command with me, after the missile crisis, and we went all over the various bases. We started out at my headquarters and ended up alongside the dock on the deck of a submarine at Key West just at evening colors. He was, of course, tremendously impressed. At Fort Stewart when he did speak to this massed armored division, and it is a tremendously impressive sight to see one of those armored divisions all in one piece, in one place, he said regard-

less of how persistent our diplomacy may be in the final analysis it rests upon the will and courage of our citizens and "upon you here."

Q: It does also indicate the fact that any confrontation involves the whole world now, doesn't it? It immediately involves -

Adm. D.: It does indeed. There's hardly a situation, remote as an area might be, in which a number of powers don't have an interest. Consider Bangladesh. It's a long, long way from there to the United States, but we're involved in it, not actively but our interests certainly are. I can't think of any area in the world where a number of national interests wouldn't be involved in varying degrees, in case of any disturbance in the political structure.

Look at NATO. NATO was founded on the idea that you can't take a square inch of NATO territory. Greece could probably lose Thrace without any great or serious consequence to other nations, except politically. We've signed that we won't permit this to happen, along with our allies. And NATO covers a considerable amount of territory, and we have other treaties almost all over the world, mutual defense pacts, SEATO.

So, at least as far as we're concerned, we're so tied in with treaties, expressed principles, that it's hard to imagine, if not impossible, any situation - the Middle East I've already mentioned - where our interests wouldn't be involved, mostly through some agreement and I think that's true of other nations as well.

Q: It has been said that the Cuban crisis taught the Soviets a lesson about sea power. Would you comment on that?

Adm. D.: Well, I think that Khrushchev realized early in the game that, to begin with, our surveillance effort was extremely impressive. He had to know that through the sightings we'd made - he must have known that we knew where his ships were, what they carried, where they were going, and so on. We'd established a line that we said you can't go beyond, and he respected it. I think he wasn't unaware at all of the versatility and the power of carrier-based aircraft. We had a tremendous deployment of those. And above all he must have realized that he was forced to give in because he was facing a manifestation of our over-all power in this simple quarantine line.

This is what threw him. I mean, had we not interfered with his operations and just let him go on, he could have gone through with his buildup and then, surely, we would have had to conduct air strikes or take whatever steps the President wished. But it seems to me that this was militarily, actively at least, a demonstration of how naval forces can be properly employed.

Q: And, to follow through on that idea, that the Russians took this and they have built on it, haven't they?

Adm. D.: Yes, they certainly did, and I think that what's going on in the Mediterranean with the increasing number of Soviet ships there and their strong naval presence, I think that shows

that they've taken a leaf out of the book of the Royal Navy and the United States Navy for the political-military uses of sea power. They're reading our text and doing just exactly what they learned from us. They've gone from a purely coastal defense navy, a puny force, to a real blue-water navy. They've got a real seagoing navy and a very good one.

Q: And this is largely since the missile crisis, is it not?

Adm. D.: Yes, I think that was the real kick-off of the whole thing. We taught them too well, perhaps. I mean, for example, they've developed the necessary techniques for a blue-water navy of replenishing and refueling at sea. This was unheard-of not too many years ago in the Soviet Navy. They just weren't geared for that kind of an operation.

Q: And now they're coming up with aircraft carriers, too.

Adm. D.: Yes and this is a weapon completely foreign to their strategy all through Russian history. It's no secret, of course, that one of the principal bases of their policy was to search for warm-water ports. Now they've found out that the way to get a warm-water port is to make friends and influence people, through power if you have to. You can't do it by having coastal defense of Soviet Russia.